

Research Article

HerShe: Women's Co-operative Marketplace

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Abstract: HerShe: Women's Co-operative Marketplace" is a pioneering digital platform thoughtfully designed to exclusively showcase and uplift products and services from women-led co-operatives. It deviates from the norm of traditional e-commerce platforms by dedicating itself entirely to the empowerment of women's co-operatives, providing them with an exclusive space to reach a broader audience. Existing e-commerce platforms do not cater specifically to co-operatives, making it challenging for them to distinguish themselves in a competitive market. Additionally, there is a shortage of platforms that promote co-operation and the sharing of knowledge among co-operatives. The platform's functionality goes beyond mere commercial transactions; it delves into the realm of collaboration and interconnectedness among co-operatives. The user-friendly interface streamlines the registration process for co-operatives, making it easy for them to showcase their diverse offerings and engage with potential buyers. Our distinctive value proposition lies in our unwavering commitment to fostering collaboration. HerShe offers a wide array of features, including interactive forums, enlightening webinars, and networking tools, creating fertile ground for co-operatives to gain insights from their peers and nurture meaningful partnerships that transcend borders. At its core, this initiative directly addresses the various challenges faced by women-led co-operatives in terms of market access and digital visibility. Moreover, the platform's emphasis on online knowledge exchange has the potential to weave a tightly knit community of women co-operative members across Malaysia, further amplifying its impact. By facilitating the connection between ethically produced goods and socially conscious consumers, our marketplace becomes a cornerstone in the foundation of women's economic empowerment and community progress. The platform's sustainability is strategically reinforced through envisioned revenue streams, including judicious transactional fees and the appeal of premium memberships. In essence, "HerShe: Empowering Women's Co-operative Marketplace" serves as a potent catalyst, igniting the flames of transformative change that aligns with women's empowerment agenda.

Keywords: women's empowerment; co-operatives; digital marketplace



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1. INTRODUCTION

Extending on the socioeconomic impact of women's empowerment, research shows that when women are given equal opportunity and assistance, they contribute considerably to economic progress. Women's empowerment results in increased investment in communities, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As a result, there is a cascade effect that leads to a more wealthy and stable society that benefits everyone. Participation in co-operatives is one method of empowering women that has been recognized as a vital instrument for improving women's socioeconomic roles as well as supporting a country's economic growth. (Latini, 2020; Lecoutere, 2017; Duguid, 2016; Majid et al., n.d.) Co-operatives are a successful economic empowerment tool for women since members have access to finance, markets, and training (Rohaya, Idris & Kunci, 2019; Saha & Sangwan, 2019). Women-led co-operatives sometimes confront difficulties in expanding their markets and engaging with potential clients. (Msosa, 2022). Existing e-commerce platforms do not have a dedicated emphasis on these cooperatives, making it difficult for them to distinguish out. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of integrative platforms that allow co-operative collaboration and knowledge exchange (Zhang, Luo & Li, 2021). The goal of this marketplace is to provide a specialised forum for displaying, marketing, and facilitating the trade of items and services produced solely by women-led co-operatives. This one-of-a-kind marketplace will not only serve as an e-commerce platform, but will also encourage co-operative collaboration by facilitating information exchange, networking, and economic empowerment.

2. MARKET POTENTIAL & CUSTOMER ANALYSIS

The market potential analysis for the "HerShe: Women's Co-operative Marketplace" platform signals a promising and potentially influential endeavour. The research should cover a wide range of topics in order to offer a full grasp of the platform's growth possibilities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential Market and Customer Analysis

Growth Prospects	Specification
Target Audience	Determine the exact demographic of women who will be targeted. Is the emphasis on a specific age group, career, region, or interest? Defining the target audience will assist in efficiently tailoring the services and marketing methods.
Market Trends & Demand	Investigate contemporary trends in economic empowerment, ethical consumption, and social effect for women. Investigate current platforms, initiatives, and cooperative models for women.
User Behavior and Preferences	Learn about women's cooperatives' choices for internet platforms, collaboration tools, and marketing. Determine customer preferences for ethically produced items as well as the likelihood of repeat purchases.
Partnerships and Collaborations	Consider creating alliances with women-focused groups, co-operatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and female businesses. Collaborations strengthen existing networks and increase credibility in the field of women's empowerment.
Marketing and Outreach	Create an all-encompassing marketing approach to reach your target demographic. Make use of social media, content marketing, influencer partnerships, and online advertising. Stories of empowered women who have benefitted from the platform should be highlighted.
Community Building	Encourage users to feel a sense of belonging. Discussion forums, webinars, workshops, and networking events centered on women's empowerment, company growth, and cooperative economics should be included.

Revenue Generation	Potential income streams, such as transaction fees, premium memberships, and collaborations, should be projected. Check that the price corresponds to the value supplied.
Sustainability and Scalability	Evaluate the platform's long-term ability to recruit and retain co-operatives, consumers, and partners. Determine the platform's scalability to allow expansion in terms of users, transactions, and features.

The “HerShe: Women’s Co-operative Marketplace” platform possesses significant market potential as a result of increased awareness of ethical consumption, women's empowerment, and cooperative partnership. The platform has the potential to have a big social and economic impact while developing a niche within the wider e-commerce environment by addressing the particular requirements of women-led co-operatives and fostering meaningful relationships.

3. PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT

The marketplace will be built as an easy-to-use internet platform and mobile application. It will include a faster registration, profile creation, and product and service uploading procedure for cooperatives. Through features like forums, webinars, and virtual networking events, the platform will be designed to stimulate engagement and collaboration among co-operatives. The process entails the following steps:

3.1 Market Research

Market research is an essential tool for firms of all sizes and sectors. It aids in the reduction of risks associated with business choices, the identification of growth prospects, and the appropriate allocation of resources to fulfil company objectives. Understanding the requirements and preferences of women's cooperatives, potential customers, and stakeholders in order to personalize the platform's features. Table 2 shows the potential competitors that already existed in the market.

Table 2. Potential competitors

Competitors / Related Platforms	Description
Etsy	While not entirely focused on women's co-operatives, Etsy is a well-known e-commerce platform that promotes handcrafted and distinctive products, which may connect with the idea of ethically manufactured co-operative goods..
Women-centric Marketplaces	Platforms that highlight items manufactured by female entrepreneurs and enterprises, while not strictly co-operatives, may overlap. An example is "Women Owned," a directory of women-owned businesses.
Co-operative Platforms	Products from women-led co-operatives may be included in general co-operative marketplaces. The particular focus on women-led co-operatives, on the other hand, provides your suggested platform a distinct aspect.
Global Giving Platforms	Platforms that promote women's empowerment programs and initiatives may compete indirectly since they may entail selling items to raise funds.
Online Forums and Networking Groups	While not typical markets, online communities, forums, and networking groups for women co-operatives may provide the cooperation and knowledge-sharing that your platform seeks. Consider Facebook Marketplace.

3.2 Platform Development

Developing a dynamic and user-friendly online marketplace with product and service categories. The expenses of building the platform might vary greatly depending on aspects such as its complexity, features, technology stack, design, development methodology, and team makeup. Here's a general breakdown of potential cost areas as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 3. Cost Development Breakdown

Area	Description
Platform Development	Front-end and back-end programming, database setup, user authentication, product catalogue management, payment gateway integration, and other services are included. Costs might vary depending on the size of the development team, hourly rates, and the complexity of the project.
Design and User Experience	It is critical to create an intuitive, user-friendly interface that is consistent with the platform's goal. The costs of design include UI/UX design, branding, logo development, and graphic assets.
Collaboration Tools	Integrating technologies for cooperative communication, knowledge exchange, and networking. Costs will be incurred when forums, webinars, networking capabilities, and other collaboration tools are developed. Real-time communication connectors, video conferencing, and community management functions may be included.
Mobile App Development	If your strategy includes offering a mobile app in addition to the online platform, development expenses for both iOS and Android versions must be addressed.
Quality Assurance and Testing	To ensure that the platform runs smoothly and safely, extensive testing, bug fixing, and quality assurance operations are required.
Security Measures	Strong security measures, such as data encryption, secure payment gateways, and user data protection, are required and may entail additional expenditures.
Server Hosting and Infrastructure	The cost of hosting will be determined by criteria such as traffic, scalability, and performance needs. AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud may be utilized as cloud hosting services.
Maintenance and Updates	Ongoing maintenance, product upgrades, bug patches, and technical support all add to the platform's long-term expenditures.
Marketing and Launch	A budget will be required for promotional efforts, marketing campaigns, collaborations, and launch events to attract co-operatives and users.
Legal and Regulatory Compliance	Budget for legal fees associated with terms of use, privacy policies, copyright, trademarks, and regulatory compliance.
Team and Expertise	Hiring costs for developers, designers, project managers, and maybe legal and marketing professionals.
Contingency	Budget for unanticipated expenditures or changes in project scope.

Without precise project information, it is difficult to offer an accurate cost estimate, however establishing a comprehensive platform of this sort can cost tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

4. VALUE PROPOSITION & COMMERCIALIZATION VALUE

A value proposition is a brief statement that expresses the distinct benefits and value that a product, service, or offering gives to its intended customers. It explains what distinguishes the offering from rivals and why buyers should select it. The platform's value proposition focuses on the following aspects:

4.1 *Dedicated Focus*

The marketplace only features items and services from women-led cooperatives, providing a one-of-a-kind and tailored purchasing experience for customers who wish to support women's economic development.

4.2 *Collaborative Environment*

The platform promotes co-operative engagement and knowledge exchange, allowing them to learn from one another's experiences, explore prospective collaborations, and jointly flourish.

4.3 *Convenience and Accessibility*

The marketplace provides a simple one-stop shop for co-operative members to buy and sell items, removing entrance obstacles for smaller co-operatives.

4.4 *Empowerment and Impact*

The platform enables women co-operative members to enhance their socioeconomic situations and positively contribute to their communities by promoting higher sales and visibility.

The commercialization potential of the marketplace may be found in the following revenue streams:

4.5 *Transaction Fees*

Each transaction on the site will be charged a tiny percentage fee.

4.6 *Premium Memberships*

Premium features and perks are available to co-operatives that choose to subscribe to upgraded services.

4.7 *Advertisement Opportunities*

Providing co-operatives with the ability to promote their products through highlighted listings and adverts.

4.8 *Partnerships*

Collaboration with like-minded groups, non-governmental organizations, and government bodies to further promote and fund the platform.

5. CONCLUSION

The proposed marketplace for women-led co-operative products fills a key need in the e-commerce environment by offering a specialised platform for exhibiting, cooperation, and commerce for women-led co-operatives. The marketplace aspires to have a beneficial and long-term influence on both local communities and society by empowering women co-operatives and encouraging economic prosperity.

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